PPS 19 Supp.

126

TOP SECRET

PPS 19 Supplementary Copy No. 1

POLICY PLANNING STAFF

PERSONAL COMMENTS BY MR. KENNAN
ON MR. RUSK'S MEMORANDUM OF
JANUARY 26, 1948

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY VWOLF JR DATE 5/25/82
RDS☐or XDS☐EXT. DATE
TS AUTH. REASON(S)
ENDORSE EXISTING MARKINGS ☐
DECLASSIFIED☒ RELEASABLE☒
RELEASE DENIED☐
PA or FOI EXEMPTIONS

January 29, 1948

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

TOP SECRET

PPS/19 (Supplementary) January 29, 1948

PERSONAL COMMENTS BY MR. KENNAN
ON MR. RUSK'S MEMORANDUM OF
JANUARY 26, 1948

My comments on Mr. Rusk's memorandum of January 26, following the order of his numbered paragraphs, are as follows:

1. No comment.

2. This paper was intended, as stated in the covering memorandum, to constitute the Department's initial position for further discussion in the National Security Council. The Staff endeavored, accordingly, to set forth in its paper only those basic principles, the minimum dictates of national interest, which it felt should be observed in our policy on Palestine from here on out. It was assumed that the detailed implementation of these principles should remain an operational matter within this Department, on which the National Security Council would not wish to pass.

The following may be said on the specific questions which Mr. Rusk feels would have to be met before the Staff paper could form the basis of a reconsideration of our policy:

(a) Question: What events have occurred which create a "new situation" with respect to the action taken by the General Assembly on Palestine?

Answer: The two months which have elapsed since the Assembly made its recommendation have been marked by violent resistance of the Arab elements in Palestine to the proposed partition. It is becoming increasingly evident that the partition scheme cannot even be initially implemented,

much less permanently maintained, without the use of outside armed force. Thus, what was once prediction has now become demonstrable fact.

Q: Were not the considerations discussed in the attached paper known at the time the decision to support the plan of the UNSCOP majority?

A: The Planning Staff was not concerned with the decision to support the plan of the UNSCOP majority, and did not attempt to assess the background of fact or the considerations which underlay that decision. I do not find this question pertinent to the subject of the Planning Staff paper.

Q: At what point or points can it be reasonably concluded that the situation in Palestine will render impossible the implementation of the General Assembly resolution?

A: The Staff paper did not speak of the situation in Palestine "rendering impossible" the implementation of the General Assembly resolution. It did speak of a point at which it will have been "conclusively demonstrated that the effort to carry out the partition plan as prescribed by the UN General Assembly offers no reasonable prospect of success without the use of outside armed forces." The determination of the stage at which this point may be considered as reached was regarded by the Staff as necessarily a matter for current operational consideration.

(b) Question: What has been done thus far by the Department of State, either within or outside the United Nations, to increase the chances of success for the solution approved by us and by the General Assembly?

Answer: I know of nothing in the Assembly resolution which placed any individual responsibility on this Government for increasing the chances of success of the solution recommended. This responsibility is clearly apportioned, by the terms of the resolution, among the mandatory power, the Commission, and the inhabitants of Palestine. This Government is appealed to, in the Preamble, to refrain from taking any action which might hamper or delay the carrying out of the recommendations; but that is not the same as being called upon to increase the chances for their success.

It is true that this Government has further responsibilities, under the UN recommendation, as a member of the Security Council. These it will of course have to face up to when the proper moment comes; and it has recognized this fact in its actions to date in the Security Council.

In this connection, the Planning Staff was perhaps remiss in not including in its paper a reference to one of the requests along these lines made by the General Assembly to the Security Council. This request, contained in paragraph (c) of the Preamble, is that the Security Council should "determine as a threat to the peace, breach of the peace or act of aggression, in accordance with Article 39 of the Charter, any attempt to alter by force the settlement envisaged by this resolution". To me, this request, which undertakes to prejudge a question obviously reserved by the UN Charter to the final competence of the Security

Council, looks like an improper and unsound action of the Assembly, to which this Government should probably not have assented and to which the Security Council should not be held. I assume, however, that it is considered to apply only to the period when the settlement in question has become an accomplished fact. If so, we would presumably still have time to recommend in the next Assembly meeting the deletion of this passage. This is a question which I think should be given serious study in Mr. Rusk's office and by Le.

(c) Question: What steps could now be taken by the Department of State, either within or outside the United Nations, to ensure maximum opportunity for the successful execution of the General Assembly recommendation on Palestine?

Answer: Mr. Rusk has himself outlined on pages 4 and 5 of his memorandum the steps which he would suggest in answering this question. These will be dealt with in detail below.

The Staff paper was based on the belief that partition would not be possible of attainment without outside assistance on a substantial scale and that no execution of the General Assembly recommendation which involved the use of force from outside could be considered as "successful". The Staff considered that any steps taken by this Government, acting individually, to promote the successful execution of the Assembly recommendation at this stage could only commit us still more deeply to a final implementation and enforcement of that recommendation by the international community. Therefore, it had no such steps to suggest.

Q: Are such steps of such a serious character as to reconsider our Palestine policy as being prohibitively costly?

A: I take this question to mean: "Are such steps of so serious a character as to warrant reconsideration of our Palestine policy on the grounds of its being prohibitively costly?" As stated, the Staff had no suggestions for such steps. With respect to the steps suggested by Mr. Rusk, the answer is: "Yes, prohibitively costly or dangerous to national security--or both."

(d) Question: If it is concluded that the recommendations of the General Assembly are unworkable, what alternative solution or solutions should the United States support and what procedures must be followed to bring about a change in our present commitments on Palestine?

Answer: The only alternatives which the Staff felt we should support were set forth in paragraph 32 of the Planning Staff paper.

I have seen no evidence that there is any possible "solution" of this problem involving the use of outside force which could be considered a "satisfactory" solution and which it would be in the interests of this country to support. Admittedly, we must do what we can not to put ourselves in the position of blocking efforts of others to find a solution to this problem. This is why it was recommended in paragraph 32 of the Staff paper that we should "cooperate loyally in working out and implementing any proposals designed (a) to encourage pacific settlement between the Palestine Arabs and Palestine Jews or (b) to investigate the possibilities of any other suggested

solution such as a federal state or trusteeship, which would not require outside armed force for implementation."

3. A "New Situation"? I agree with Mr. Rusk's definition of the turn of events which might justify a reconsideration of the Palestine problem. I have no objection to the samples he cites of what might be considered a "new situation", although it seems to me that point (e), which refers to civil war within Palestine, considerably overshadows the others in importance and probability. The Staff paper did not state that the contingency calling for reconsideration of the Assembly resolution had yet arisen. But it took account of the fact that this contingency is rapidly arising in the form of the trend of events within Palestine itself. I personally consider it likely that the contingency will be definitely established, in the sense of Mr. Rusk's point (e), before the April 1 deadline which he mentions.

4. Armed Interference with the General Assembly Resolution. I am concerned at Mr. Rusk's suggestion that armed interference in Palestine by the Arab States to prevent the implementation of the Assembly resolution, even in the form of furnishing arms and assistance for guerilla action, would constitute aggression, and that the United States has a responsibility as a permanent member of the Security Council to act within the limits of the Charter to prevent this. (The Preamble to the Assembly resolution spoke not of "preventing the implementation" but of attempting "to alter by force the settlement envisaged.")

If it were true that we had the responsibility Mr. Rusk imputes to us, it would constitute an existing commitment which would cut at right angles across our entire policy with regard to the Middle East, and our world-wide military-political strategy as well. Fortunately, I do not think that this commitment can be said to exist at this time, or that there would be any question of its existing until the Jewish and Arab states have been duly established, the new governments organized, their authority clearly recognized by the mass of the Palestine inhabitants of both camps, and the admission of the new states to UN membership made an accomplished fact.

As to enforcement within Palestine, I have nothing to add to the recommendations of the Staff paper, which stated that we should oppose sending armed forces into Palestine by the UN or any member thereof for the purpose of implementing partition and that we should also oppose the recruitment of volunteers for this purpose.

5. The Role of the Mandatory Power (United Kingdom). I am also deeply concerned over Mr. Rusk's attitude toward the position of the United Kingdom in the Palestine question.

The Planning Staff, in drafting its paper, saw no need for making moral judgments on the policies of other nations in the Palestine question or for dealing with the British position otherwise than as a given fact.

The effort to shift responsibility back to the United Kingdom, as Mr. Rusk suggests, would not promote a solution of the real difficulties in Palestine. It would be firmly and promptly rejected by the British. It would increase

anti-British feeling in this country and exacerbate Anglo-American relations. It might serve to relieve the immediate pressure on this Government and to divert some of it to the British Government. But it would do this, inevitably, at the expense of Anglo-American collaboration in the Middle Eastern area in general and therefore at the expense of the strategic interests of this country.

This Government is not prepared to replace the British Government in the military positions it has occupied, and is occupying, in the Middle Eastern area. In the opinion of the working levels in this Department and in the Armed Services Departments, it is undesirable that we should attempt to do this. On the other hand, Britain plainly has neither the resources nor the will to shoulder once more the political burden of enforcing a Palestine solution which fails to satisfy both Jews and Arabs. The necessity for the observance of parallel policies in that area was specifically embodied in the results of the working level discussions with the British last fall, which were approved by the National Security Council.

// In my opinion, there is no positive consideration involved in the Palestine question which could justify the disturbance of the understanding and cooperation between ourselves and the British, at which we have only recently succeeded in arriving, in Middle Eastern matters. I cannot state too emphatically my belief that any attempt on our part to ease for ourselves the ugly realities of the Palestine problem by creating further embarrassment for the British there would be gravely prejudicial to our national interest. //

For these reasons, I do not feel that we should put further pressure on the British, with respect to arms shipments to Arab countries. The importation of arms into Palestine is still clearly a question for the mandatory power, which bears responsibility for internal law and order there. As for British relations with the Arabs, the remaining British strategic positions in the Middle East are among the few real assets which we still have in that area. The British position there is in large part our position, and must be protected as such. It is in the interests of this country that both the U.S. and U.K. should not find themselves simultaneously in that position of extreme unpopularity with the Arab world which we occupy today.

6. Measures Designed to Increase the Chances for Success of the Partition Plan. I reiterate: I do not know of any specific obligation resting on the Department of State or on this Government individually to take measures to increase the chances for successful implementation of the General Assembly resolution at this juncture. I further feel that any active efforts on our part in this direction would only involve us more deeply in the moral obligation to see this solution through, even to the bitter end of international enforcement.

Such possibilities were therefore not specifically explored in the Planning Staff paper.

I think the force of this position can be seen from an examination of Mr. Rusk's suggestions:

(a) Bilateral Talks with the United Kingdom. Mr. Rusk suggests that such talks "attempt to uncover the elements of the Assembly resolution to which the British object, their purpose in placing the matter before the United Nations, their idea of a solution with which they would be willing to cooperate, and their attitude toward joint diplomatic action to obtain the cooperation of the Arab States."

There is no unclarity as to the reasons why the British placed this matter before the UN, as to the elements in the Assembly resolution to which they object, or as to their idea of a solution with which they would be willing to cooperate. British policy in these matters has been set forth with enviable clarity and emphasis on a number of occasions; and I would refer Mr. Rusk particularly to Mr. Bevin's statement in the House of Commons on February 25, 1947. We need have no doubt that their attitude toward joint diplomatic action to attain the cooperation of the Arab States would be inflexibly negative.

(b) Multilateral Diplomatic Talks. The events of the past months in the Palestine question have already been little short of disastrous for our relations with the Arab world. We cannot strain those relations any further without envisaging the complete disruption of many of our existing ties with the Middle East area and serious injury to our economic and strategic interests. The Turks, furthermore, have already expressed their dismay at what they regard as the inconsistency of our Palestine policy with our other policies in that area, and they would hardly be amenable to such an approach.

(c) Action by the Security Council. //Any action by the Security Council to enforce the Palestine resolution will bring us closer to the point at which we will be asked to put up armed forces or to permit the recruitment of international volunteers for operations in Palestine. The Policy Planning Staff is firmly opposed to both of these solutions, considering them seriously detrimental to national security.//

(d) Active United States Participation in the Establishment of the International Territory of Jerusalem. Any United States initiative to hasten the implementation of Part III of the Assembly resolution, concerning the city of Jerusalem, would be vulnerable to the same objections as were outlined above with respect to the Security Council action. I would raise the question whether the responsibilities devolving upon the United Nations from these provisions can properly be expected to become operative in the absence of the implementation of the remainder of the partition scheme.

(e) Exploitation of Differences of View Among the Arabs. This is again a course which would sacrifice our over-all relations with the Arab world to the requirements of the Palestine situation. It might achieve a cheap and momentary success. For the long run, I doubt that the mass of the Arabs would ever forgive us for resorting to it. It seems to me that such a course is neither in keeping with the general character of our diplomatic practice nor consistent with the integrity of our policy in the Middle East.

7. Alternative Lines of Action.

(a) The first suggestion is that the General Assembly call upon the United Kingdom to consult with the Arabs and the Jews in the light of the unanimous recommendations of UNSCOP and to seek a solution agreeable to both parties. This would appear to me to place the British in the precise position they were in the middle of 1946 when they called the Palestine Conference in London. You will recall that the Jews refused to participate in that Conference, despite the expressed hope of President Truman that they might do so, and that the Conference came to no positive result. I am not aware of any possible agreed solution which the British failed to explore during the period when they were endeavoring to find some satisfactory way of relieving themselves of this responsibility. I am sure that the United Kingdom will not again accept any responsibility of this nature.

(b) It is suggested here that a United Nations trusteeship be established for the whole of Palestine, in which the U.S. would take "its fair share" of the physical and security responsibility.

We may have to come to this, and the Staff paper recommended that we cooperate loyally in the working out and implementing of any proposals in the United Nations for exploring the possibility of such a solution, provided it would not require outside armed forces for implementation. The Staff did not recommend, however, that this Government take any responsibility for the initiation of such a proposal, since it failed to see how even a United Nations trusteeship could fail to become a constant headache

to the trustee power, a source of further controversy in the United Nations, and a cause of reproach to the authors of the suggestion.

8. United States Responsibility. Mr. Rusk is correct that a hands-off policy will leave Palestine in a state of violence. For that, all of us will share some measure of blame who have been concerned with the Palestine question in these past 30 years; but the main responsibility will have to continue to rest with the Jewish leaders and organizations who have pushed so persistently for the pursuit of objectives which could scarcely fail to lead to violent results.

It is my opinion that the commitments we have already undertaken in this matter are of such a nature that if an attempt were made to carry them out in the literal sense it would soon prove intolerable to national opinion, would lead to violent dissatisfaction with the leadership of our foreign policy, and would have other internal repercussions of an extremely undesirable nature.

In these circumstances, I think we have no choice but to try to extricate ourselves from the existing commitments as rapidly as possible and to see to it that we do nothing which would add any new ones to the present list. I believe that we, and the international community in general, will have to recognize that we have in Palestine a situation with which neither the United Nations nor any outside power is really able to deal successfully at this juncture. We may hope that the absence of international interference will eventually lead the parties themselves to a greater

appreciation of their own interest and responsibility. We should scrupulously refrain from adding by anything we may do or say to the prospects for violence between them. At the same time, we should not attempt to be our brother's keeper or to offer moral advice to other powers when we are unable to bear our own full share of the responsibility for the consequences.

This may indeed involve a loss of prestige both for us and the United Nations. But I think it will be worth it if we can thereby regain the full independence and dignity of our position in this confused and tragic question.